

which have by now mostly become mute and with which they did not know what to do. Hand in hand with the reading went the writing. They wrote on small wooden tablets covered with black lacquer with wide reed pens and white, sticky clay. In the course of three winters Dondrub had brought his pupils to the point that they were able to read and write simple things fairly fluently in the printed and in the written script. Aside from reading and writing, the lama also taught the boys a little arithmetic, but in so doing he did not go beyond the numerical cycle of 100; his own knowledge did not extend beyond that. The rosary with its 108 beads had to serve in this--as it also does otherwise in monetary transactions between Tibetans--as a counting machine.

Lama Dondrub did not plague either himself or his students with any other branches of knowledge. Old Konchog Trashi told them the old legends and fairytales /51/; from him the boys also heard how the ancient, once mighty West Tibetan Kingdom of Ladakh came to an end when the Dogras from northwestern India (Jammu) invaded the country and vanquished the poorly armed and poorly led but valiant men of Ladakh after a six-year battle, deposed the king, and assumed rule. Now they also understood why in the capital of Leh there dominated and ruled a Wasir who did not belong to their people but who was an Indian; they understood why their district was administered by an Indian district official and judge and why in the fortresses in Leh, in Kalatse, and in Kargil there were Indian soldiers stationed who were sent now here and now there in order to maintain peace and order and to remind recalcitrant taxpayers and forced laborers of their duty by forcible means.

Not overburdened with book learning Namgyal thus entered life. The little he had learned nevertheless elevated him above the majority of his compatriots who had not attended school and who mostly had no desire to do so. "We are stupid as oxen," neighbor Sherab used to say, despite his proud name which means "wisdom." "Our fathers were unable to read or write, why should we bother with it? We have more important things to do with our fields and with our cattle." A farmer has no time to acquire book learning; that is a matter for the lamas.

Even if Namgyal's book learning did not go very far, he nevertheless developed into an industrious Tibetan farmer under the tutelage and instigation of his father and of his uncle Stobsldan, a brother of his father's. He soon knew how to handle horses, donkeys, cows, sheep and goats; he knew how to lead the plow skillfully through the stony field and how to water the field and the garden properly; he was able to

868 are real picnics, for *zan* and cooking-pots and wooden cups are all taken, also a little bit of food ready prepared in the pocket to eat when away up the hillside, where many a tale is told, and many a song is sung, echoing across the valley from one rocky perch to another. So the happy days of childhood pass, and in this land of primitive needs it is indeed difficult to get the children together for school. In the winter they get up so late, for fuel is scarce, dung has to be collected, and wood is so expensive, and bed is the warmest place till between 9 and 10 a.m. Summer is still worse, especially for the girls, as they must be off to the hills with the sheep and goats, so cannot be spared, and when they reach their teens plans for marriage are laid.

- 802 But why learn arithmetic when nature provides such a convenient counting-board as the knuckles. With the thumb as pointer, each finger has three joints, a total of thirty on which calculations can be made. Why measure time in years, when a contract may be worded as poetically and conclusively as follows:—"the bond to last till the crows turn white, and the glaciers melt." Where payment is made in kind, wages need not be calculated; thus your fields can be worked by giving the labourer part of the products. Only the gods must not be forgotten, for the first few handfuls of corn plucked must be tied to the pillars of the best room, and dedicated to the god of the brotherhood to which any given family belongs. For each family is linked up in such a brotherhood, the members of which are called *pa-spin* (man-brethren). These are originally relations, though outsiders may be sworn-in at a special feast, and all worship at a common altar, presided over by their special deity. This custom is said to be a remnant of the ancient worship before Buddhism came to the country, the gods sometimes having Hindu names. The altar is originally built as a platform of mud and stone, and on it is placed a clay pot, round which a wall is built. Into the pot are placed small offerings, such as grain, coral, pearl,